

BELL WANTS OUT

Parade
Griffin
Bell, 59,
the U.S.
attorney
general and one of Jimmy Carter's "Georgia Mafia," is determined to resign as head of the U.S. Justice Department before the 1980 Presidential campaign gets underway.

Mindful of such controversial predecessors as Robert Kennedy, Ramsey Clark, John Mitchell and Elliot Richardson, the incumbent attorney general is convinced that "history in recent years makes people suspicious" of the Justice Department.

Moreover, Bell feels that if Carter runs for reelection, "the President would be better off without me. I'd advise him to get an attorney general from somewhere else than Georgia. Being a Georgian isn't highly regarded in Washington right now."

Bell, who's had his hands full at Justice, declared his intention to resign at his alma mater, the Mercer University School of Law in Macon, where he recently spoke on political ethics and the press.

Before Bell emerged as one of Jimmy Carter's most controversial Cabinet appointments, he was a partner in the prestigious

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Atlanta law firm of King & Spalding.

A veteran politico, Bell served as Georgia campaign manager for the late John F. Kennedy in 1960. When Kennedy was elected, he expressed his gratitude to Bell by appointing him to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which embraces the Deep South and became during Bell's tenure (1961-76) a judicial battleground for the major civil rights disputes of the nation.

Lawyers who appeared before Bell regarded him as a member of the court's conservative wing but found him fair and competent even though he supported G. Harrold Carswell, a Nixon nominee for the Supreme Court.

Bell was born in Americus, 12 miles from Plains, Ga., in 1918. He attended Georgia Southwestern College, served in the Army during World War II for five years and received his law degree from Mercer University in 1948.

When he resigns from the Carter Cabinet, this blunt, gruff, forthright lawyer will undoubtedly return to the more financially remunerative environment of King & Spalding. He flew back to that comfortable nest in 1976 after leaving the bench.